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Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed and to submit a report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Subsequently, in paragraph 14 of its resolution 1876 (2009), the Council requested me to submit a written report every four months on progress in establishing the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), with the first report due by 31 October 2009. The report covers developments since my last report (S/2009/302), dated 10 June 2009, with particular focus on the tension that followed the political assassinations of 5 June 2009, as well as the presidential elections of 28 June 2009 and the run-off that was held on 26 July 2009.

II. Political developments

2. The period under review was dominated by the tension that followed the assassinations of presidential candidate and former Minister of Territorial Administration, Baciro Dabó, and former Minister of Defence, Helder Proença, on 5 June 2009, on the eve of the official launch of the electoral campaign. The presidential elections held on 28 June, with a run-off between the two leading candidates on 26 July, passed peacefully, without major incident. Malam Bacai Sanha, the candidate of the governing African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), won the second round of the presidential elections, against former President Mohamed Yalá, candidate of the opposition Social Renewal Party (PRS). In his inauguration speech on 8 September, President Sanha expressed the wish to open a new chapter in the political life of the country on the basis of dialogue, stability and social justice, in which the rule of law and the sanctity of human life would be respected to the fullest. He pledged that peace and stability, based on reconciliation, would be the cornerstone of his presidency. He also stated that efforts would be made to shed more light on the March 2009 assassinations in

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order to end impunity in the country. Among those who attended the ceremony were the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal.

3. I was represented at the inauguration ceremony by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios. During his visit, Mr. Menkerios held extensive consultations with President Sanha, Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior and other national stakeholders, the United Nations country team and other international partners on international support to national efforts aimed at ensuring political stabilization, peace consolidation, implementing public administration and security sector reforms, and completing the national investigations into the political assassinations of March and June 2009. These consultations also included discussions on the establishment of UNIOGBIS in January 2010.

4. Following the inauguration ceremony, Raimundo Pereira, who had served as Interim President following the assassination in March 2009 of President João Bernardo Vieira, resumed his mandate as the Speaker of the National Assembly. The Assembly is now preparing for the convening of a national conference on the theme "Conflicts in Guinea-Bissau: causes, prevention, resolution and consequences". It is envisaged that a series of regional conferences will culminate in a national conference to identify the causes of conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, the contradictions between State and non-State institutions and conflict prevention mechanisms and strategies. It will involve participants from civil society organizations, the justice and security sectors, veterans, faith organizations, women, youth and the media.

5. The participatory dialogue programme led by the National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP) in partnership with Interpeace, Voz di Paz, also resumed its activities for the regional validation of the results of its 10-month grass-roots consultations held in 2008. It is likely that the process will culminate in a national conference in Bissau in November 2009. Voz di Paz is working with the National Assembly to explore the possibility of collaboration between the two bodies and of synergies between the two initiatives.

III. Elections

6. Out of 13 candidates, only 11 participated in the presidential elections on 28 June. Pedro Infanda, a lawyer associated with former Navy Chief of Staff Bubo Na Tchuto, who had been accused of a coup attempt in August 2008, withdrew from the race on security grounds. The campaigning period was generally peaceful, although an escalation in negative attacks during the final days of the campaign was observed. Despite the fears and tensions engendered by recent high profile assassinations, the elections were held in an orderly and peaceful manner. The results were not contested and were judged by international observers as free, fair and transparent. During the first round of balloting, Mr. Sanha obtained 39.59 per cent of the votes and Mr. Yalá 29.42 per cent, while the former transitional President, Henrique Pereira Rosa (independent), came in third with 24.19 per cent of the votes. The abstention rate of 40 per cent was the highest since the 1994 multiparty elections. Since no candidate obtained 50 per cent plus one of the votes, a run-off between the first two candidates was held on 26 July. The campaign for the second round was also held in a peaceful manner. The voter and civic education campaigns prior to the run-off focused more on reducing voter abstention. Mr. Sanha won 63.31 per cent of the vote, as against 36.69 per cent for Mr. Yalá.

The abstention rate remained high at 39 per cent. Mr. Yalá conceded defeat shortly after the announcement of the provisional results on 29 July, considerably easing fears of a backlash from his supporters.

7. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the Government in planning, resource mobilization and the coordination of donors' support for the elections. Contributions received in 2008 to support the electoral cycle and strengthen national capacities to manage electoral processes allowed for the planning process to start in early March 2009. One of the key innovations was the involvement of civil society organizations, together with the National Electoral Commission, in the conceptualization, planning and implementation of the civic education activities. On 5 and 6 May, the National Electoral Commission, with UNDP assistance, organized a national meeting to map out a strategy for the civic education campaign, which resulted in the establishment of a coordination group of civil society organizations working with the National Electoral Commission/UNDP team. A budget of $4.9 million and a chronogram of activities were jointly prepared with the National Electoral Commission and presented to the international community for support. In addition to providing funds, UNDP mobilized and channelled contributions from the European Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Angola, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Portugal provided electoral materials directly to the National Electoral Commission, and Nigeria supported election security operations.

8. At the request of the National Electoral Commission, UNOGBIS coordinated the activities of international election observers, with technical assistance from the Government of Canada. One hundred and eleven international observers were registered by UNOGBIS in the first round, and 106 in the second round. UNOGBIS also coordinated the activities of regional election observation missions, including from the African Union, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, ECOWAS, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Canada, Iceland, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and non-governmental organizations, including Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme (RADDHO) and Réseau international des observateurs électoraux, also fielded missions under the coordination of UNOGBIS. UNOGBIS facilitated coordination meetings between the various missions and the election observation missions from the European Union (EU) and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, before and after both rounds of the elections, for exchange of information on deployment plans and observation activities. Subregional organizations benefited from greater logistical autonomy in comparison to previous elections.

9. Twenty-two representatives and trainers nominated by the campaign management teams of the 11 candidates, and seven journalists participated in a seminar on the electoral law with special focus on the voting process, organized by UNOGBIS in partnership with the Faculty of Law of Bissau, from 16 to 17 June. This seminar was followed by a training-of-trainers session for electoral agents on 18 June. A second seminar was organized on 15 July for 30 representatives of the two candidates in the run-off. UNOGBIS funded the civic education activities of two youth groups aimed at promoting tolerance and mitigating violence in Bissau during both rounds of the elections. A $20,100 project to support the media coverage of the elections was developed and implemented with the support of

France and the United Kingdom. The project included the organization of a seminar attended by 43 journalists, and the donation of equipment and subsidies to public, private and community radios. Seven newspapers, five national radios, 17 community radios, two news agencies and the national television were sponsored. A team was established to monitor the media coverage of the presidential elections and included representatives of the National Council of Social Communication (Conselho Nacional de Comunicação Social), the journalists' union SINJOTECS, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League and the UNOGBIS information unit. The team considered that public and private media had offered fair coverage of the elections despite a lack of resources.

IV. Military and security aspects

10. The tense atmosphere that followed the 5 June 2009 assassinations has slowly given way to the return of normalcy in the country. Interim President Pereira and the then interim Chief of General Staff Induta attended the thirty-sixth ordinary session of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, in Abuja, on 22 June 2009. A communiqué issued at the end of the summit urged all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau, especially the security forces, to take all necessary measures to guarantee a climate of peace conducive to free, transparent and credible elections. The communiqué commended the decision by the President of Nigeria to provide financial assistance in the amount of $3.5 million to cover three months of salary arrears of the armed forces and provide vehicles and communications equipment to them. The payment of the salary arrears contributed to creating the necessary conditions for the military to secure the elections and play a neutral role. The Ministries of the Interior, the Defence, and Territorial Administration, and the National Electoral Commission drew up a security plan for the elections involving the deployment of 1,000 defence personnel and 2,998 security personnel nationwide. The Armed Forces General Staff issued a communiqué on 14 July, calling on both candidates in the run-off to abstain from incitement to disorder and, in particular, from making statements that involved, or could destabilize, the military. It gave the assurance that the military would provide security during the elections without discriminating against any particular political, religious or ethnic groups. Following his election, President Sanha issued a decree on 23 September 2009 confirming the appointment of Navy Captain Zamora Induta as Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces.

11. On 13 July, the media reported incidents allegedly related to drug trafficking along the border between Guinea-Bissau and neighbouring Guinea. The Guinea-Bissau authorities subsequently increased the level of security alertness on the border. A communiqué from the armed forces stressed that troops were not involved in any of the incidents. On 6 August, the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister of Defence and the interim Chief of General Staff, visited the Republic of Guinea to discuss, with his counterpart, concerns over the border issues and give assurances about the commitment of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to maintaining good relations with its neighbours. On 29 September, the Minister of Natural Resources, on behalf of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, expressed concerns over developments in neighbouring Guinea and stated that the Government was working on a contingency response plan, especially with respect to the possible influx of Guineans seeking refuge in Guinea-Bissau. The Chief of General Staff

stated that the Border Guards were on alert, and he gave assurances that there was no threat to the country from a military point of view.

12. A mission from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat visited Bissau from 7 to 11 September to discuss with UNOGBIS and national authorities the possibilities of resuming the project on small arms that was suspended after the assassination of President Vieira. The mission reviewed with the National Small Arms Commission a plan of short and medium-term activities aimed at building government capacity to tackle the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, including a pilot illicit arms collection and destruction project in conjunction with the ECOWAS small arms programme. On 15 September, the National Commission, with funding from UNOGBIS, held a workshop in Bissau to validate the small arms and light weapons national survey carried out by INEP in 2008.

13. UNOGBIS, in partnership with Radio Sol Mansi, launched a six-month project of two weekly radio programmes targeting audiences from the defence and security forces on topics related to human rights, peace and the restructuring of the armed forces. Three workshops on the role of the police in democracy, human rights, ethics and the use of force and fire arms were organized by the UNOGBIS civilian police unit from 16 to 18 June 2009 for 60 police officers in the regions of Bafatá, Gabú and Buba. Three more workshops on the same topics were held for 60 police officers from 25 to 27 August in the regions of Oio, Cachéu and Biombo.

V. Security sector reform

14. The ECOWAS summit held in Abuja on 22 June 2009 emphasized the need to send a joint team of experts of ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union to assess the needs for security sector reform and financial stability. ECOWAS Heads of State and Government also directed the ECOWAS Commission, in collaboration with the African Union and in consultation with the Guinea-Bissau authorities, to look into the feasibility of setting up a group of experts to monitor the implementation of security sector reform. A preparatory meeting will be held in Bissau in October 2009 to prepare for a meeting later in the year in Abuja focusing on security sector reform.

15. The draft pension fund proposal document, developed with EU financial support, was presented by EU consultants to the armed forces hierarchy on 5 August 2009, and to Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior and the Council of Ministers on 6 August. The document proposes the setting up of two separate pension funds. The first would be transitory and set up for those whose retirement has been deferred, and would require State contributions and international resource mobilization. The second pension fund would be perpetual and sourced from the salaries of future beneficiaries. On 6 October, the document was presented to the members of the security sector reform Steering Committee and reviewed by the Council of Ministers on 8 October. A final decision on several key issues related to the implementation of the pension fund, including the percentage of the salaries that the beneficiaries would receive as their monthly pension, is expected by the beginning of November 2009.

16. On 8 October, the Council of Ministers approved a six-month extension of the mandate of the European mission established to support security sector reform in

Guinea-Bissau (EU security sector reform mission), under the European Security and Defence Policy, which was initially to expire on 30 November 2009. The EU security sector reform mission has already submitted to the Government, for approval and action, a number of laws and organizational documents in the areas of military, police and public prosecution.

17. A mission from the Council of the European Union visited Bissau from 14 to 17 September 2009 to assess the feasibility of future support from the European Security and Defence Policy to the country. The mission submitted its assessment and recommendations to the EU member States on 25 September 2009. A final decision is expected by the end of October 2009.

18. A Brazilian military mission visited Bissau from 14 to 18 September 2009 to identify with the national authorities the site that would host the future Brazilian military and police training and cooperation mission.

VI. Drug trafficking and organized crime

19. Reports suggest that there has been a downward trend in the trafficking of cocaine through West Africa over the past few months, as well as a decline in drug seizures. However, concerns remain following the identification of clandestine laboratories to produce cocaine, heroin and ecstasy in neighbouring Guinea. This new development is exposing the territory of Guinea-Bissau to the activities of criminal groups, and requires continued efforts from the national authorities and law enforcement entities. Judicial Police officers trained by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the support of Brazil, EU and Portugal, have increased their presence and intervention in the country. However, the situation in the islands of the Bijagós Archipelago remains fragile in the absence of adequate resources, including law enforcement, communication and transportation capacities. In May 2009, investigators from the Judicial Police anti-drug unit documented a wide network involved in producing false travel documents with the assistance of accomplices working in the public administration, and the smuggling of migrants.

20. From 13 to 17 July, 19 senior magistrates attended a UNODC workshop on international cooperation tools and mechanisms in the fight against drugs and organized crime. The training marked the start of a programme aimed at establishing a specialized pool of judges and prosecutors to support the overall chain of action and ensure effective enforcement of law, prosecution and judgement. In September, UNODC deployed a legal expert to the Ministry of Justice to support UNODC activities in the justice sector and to reinforce the impact and capacity of its technical assistance projects, including the reform of the prison system, the training of public officials, legal counselling and the implementation of international legal standards within the national criminal legal framework.

VII. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund

21. During the period under review, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission continued its engagement with the country. The Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations and Chairperson of the

Guinea-Bissau configuration, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, visited the country from 7 to 12 September to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Sanha and to consult with the key national and international stakeholders on the priority actions in the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. Following her visit, the Government, with the Ministry of Economy in the lead, gave fresh impetus to the technical team that had assisted in the drafting of the Strategic Framework and Priority Plan in 2008. The technical team aims to complete preparations for the review of the Strategic Framework by the end of November 2009.

22. Some progress has been achieved in the implementation of the projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund in Guinea-Bissau. The Ministry of Youth and UNDP project on professional training and employment of youth selected 100 young people for training in the areas of electricity, civil construction, auto repairs, refrigeration and air conditioning, and sewing. Another 100 young people were trained in Bissau in business start-ups and management, with 80 being selected to draft business proposals for funding through selected banks. An additional 120 young people received the same training in the regions of Quinara, Gabu and Cachéu. The training was completed at the end of September and will be followed by a second training programme on the drafting of business plans. With regard to the Ministry of Justice and UNODC project, construction work to rehabilitate selected prisons started in July in Bafata and Mansoa. As part of the Ministry of Defence and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) project for the rehabilitation of military barracks, the Minister of Defence, in September, endorsed the reformulation of the project document proposed by UNOPS.

VIII. Economic and social aspects

23. The economic and fiscal situation remains fragile, but there are encouraging signs. Economic growth is set to decline by 0.4 per cent less than the initial forecast of 1.3 per cent, largely owing to record exports of about 132,000 tons of cashew nuts, the main export crop. The Government is up to date with civil service salaries, although it still owes three months of civil service salary arrears from 2008. In addition, the Government has indicated that national revenue increased by 12.2 per cent in the first half of 2009 as a result of measures to strengthen revenue collection. However, during the reporting period, the disbursement of budgetary support from international partners was delayed. Only $12.24 million out of $44 million pledged for this year was disbursed as of early August 2009.

24. On 16 June 2009, the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank discussed the Interim Strategy Note that sets out the Bank's support to the 2009-2010 reform programmes of the Guinea-Bissau Government. The Board also approved an $8 million grant to Guinea-Bissau to better implement its poverty reduction strategy. On 19 June, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a third emergency post-conflict assistance programme of approximately $2.74 million. IMF noted that recent progress on structural reforms to strengthen fiscal management was encouraging and demonstrated that the authorities had the capacity to implement the proposed programme. At the same time, it recommended speeding up the pace of fiscal reforms to further build capacity and improve confidence in the economy. Satisfactory performance under the emergency post-conflict assistance programme and assigning a poverty reduction and growth facility arrangement remain priorities of the Government in 2009.

25. On 9 September, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of Guinea-Bissau signed a $12 million grant agreement, including a government capacity-building support project, to improve public administration professional training conditions and quality, as well as to modernize and strengthen national capacities within Guinea-Bissau's economic and financial bodies. Within the framework of this agreement, AfDB and UNDP have developed a joint programme to strengthen national capacities in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and aid coordination. UNDP will implement the AfDB-funded component of the programme.

26. The 2008-2009 school year was extended until the end of August 2009 to compensate for time lost owing to the late start of the school year and teachers' strikes. Although a compromise was reached between the Government and teachers, a large backlog of salary arrears to teachers on temporary contracts persists and the danger of future disruption in classes for the new school year that started in October 2009 remains high.

27. Despite the Government efforts to better control the price of basic food, the cost of rice, the basic staple, increased by an average of 20 to 30 per cent over the past 12 months. The cost of other cereals also remains comparatively high. Commercial imports of rice are estimated at 84,521 tons, while national production is estimated at 53,208 tons. With a view to sustaining the local production of rice, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are supporting a food-for-work programme aimed at rehabilitating 2,156 hectares for cultivation in the northern region of Oio. The World Bank funded WFP food-for-work schemes from June to July 2009 in the regions of Bafatá, Biombo, Cacheu, Gabú and Oio, in order to rehabilitate 2,292 hectares and provide 68 tons of seeds benefiting 9,198 households. In addition to these initiatives, the Government, FAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund and WFP have signed a new Millennium Development Goal Fund for a three-year nutrition project scheduled to start in October 2009, which would support 20,000 children under the age of five and 15,000 primary school children.

28. No cases of influenza A (H1N1) have been reported in the country, but United Nations agencies, under the leadership of WHO, have supported the Government in designing preparedness and response plans, and strengthening national surveillance and rapid response teams.

29. On 19 June, the Government took delivery of the "Euroafricana" bridge at São Vicente over the river Cacheu, which was funded by EC. The bridge will facilitate the movement of people and goods from Bissau to southern Senegal and the Gambia, and facilitate subregional trade and integration.

IX. Rule of law and human rights aspects

30. Four people, including a former Air Force Chief of Staff, General Manuel Melciades Fernandes, are still being held by the military in connection with the bomb attack that killed General Tagme on 1 March 2009. In addition, six people, including former Prime Minister Faustino Imbali, were arrested and detained by the military on 5 June 2009, in connection with the coup attempt that was allegedly averted the same day. One of the detainees was the Director General of the State

Intelligence Services, Antero João Correia, who reportedly refused to sign the communiqué of the State body alleging the coup on 5 June. According to the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League, the detainees showed signs of torture and ill treatment. On 29 June, Mr. Imbali and three other suspects were transferred to the Office of the Prosecutor General and questioned by a commission set up by that office to investigate the alleged coup plot. On 7 July, two of the detainees, including Mr. Correia, were released. Mr. Imbali was later released on bail from preventive detention on 12 August on medical grounds and is receiving treatment outside the country. Domingos Brosca, the remaining civilian detainee, was released on 22 September. Parliamentarians Francisco Conduto de Pina and Roberto Cacheu, cited in the Intelligence Services' communiqué, sought shelter in the Bissau Catholic Church. They appeared before the domestic commission of inquiry investigating the political assassinations of June 2009, which announced, on 14 August, that there was no evidence against them. Despite the ruling, a group of military personnel entered the premises of the Catholic Church on 15 August in an attempt to arrest Mr. Conduto de Pina, a development that was denounced by the bishops of Bissau and Bafata in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister.

31. Following the Prime Minister's request for United Nations support to the investigations into the political assassinations of March 2009, the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, held extensive consultations to agree on a joint international support scheme to the national commission of inquiry investigating the incidents. At the same time, consultations at the technical level were held in Bissau, involving UNOGBIS, ECOWAS, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Judicial Police, on the provision of international forensic, legal and other experts to assist the Commission. An additional request by the Government for support to secure evidence and provide security arrangements for witnesses and national investigators, including officials from the Judicial Police, the Office of the Prosecutor General and relevant courts, is being considered.

32. During the period under review, several incidents of harassment linked to the March and June 2009 political assassinations were reported. A former Secretary of State for Communication and owner of the private newspaper *Diário de Bissau*, João de Barros, told the press that he had resisted street arrest by individuals before being summoned to the State Intelligence Services, in connection with the publication by his newspaper of reports on the June assassinations. The Prosecutor General also reported death threats linked to the March and June events. On 12 August, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League, on the occasion of its eighteenth anniversary, denounced the recent assassinations of political and other figures, the widespread prevalence of impunity, persistent cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, curbs on freedom of expression and acts of intimidation by the military and police officers. It urged the Government and military high command to foster respect for human rights and the rule of law.

X. Implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and resolution 1820 (2008)

33. During the reporting period, the Gender Thematic Working Group, co-chaired by UNOGBIS and the United Nations Population Fund, continued to provide

support for the reporting process to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the elaboration of a national policy on gender equity and equality. A national delegation, headed by the President of the Guinea-Bissau Institute of Women and Children and accompanied by staff members from UNOGBIS and the United Nations inter-agency committee on gender, presented for the first time the combined periodic reports of Guinea-Bissau to the forty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in New York, on 3 August 2009. As part of UNOGBIS support for the presidential election, the Mission and UNDP provided financial support to the Women's Political Platform to conduct a countrywide advocacy and sensitization campaign aimed at preventing violence and fostering women's participation.

XI. Staff security

34. The crime rate continues to be relatively low. However, reports on petty crime increased during the reporting period. Three house burglaries and three street robberies involving United Nations staff members were also reported.

XII. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

35. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1876 (2009), the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have initiated transition arrangements for the establishment of UNIOGBIS, effective 1 January 2010. In order to ensure a smooth and timely transition process, in particular with respect to the recruitment of new staff for the integrated office, the current capacity of UNOGBIS is being reinforced through the deployment of a Chief of Staff and a Strategic Planner. The overall budget proposal for the new integrated office has been developed and is currently being considered by the General Assembly. In addition, the Department of Field Support is also providing support to UNOGBIS for the development of a comprehensive transition plan.

36. A team of six members from the United Nations Standing Police Capacity was deployed to Guinea-Bissau from 2 to 30 June 2009. The main objective was to assist UNOGBIS with assessment and strategic planning for the establishment of UNIOGBIS, which will have an expanded role on policing. The Standing Police Capacity team held several meetings with the national authorities, members of civil society, representatives of the international community, the EU security sector reform mission, and relevant international partners, as well as the United Nations country team.

37. The focus was on issues related to the reform, restructuring and rebuilding of the police and other law enforcement agencies as part of security sector reform. A team of five police officers from the Standing Police Capacity started its deployment to Bissau on 12 October to support UNOGBIS to conclude the strategic and operational planning. It is envisaged that the team will also support UNIOGBIS in the first quarter of 2010 to ensure a smooth transition into the new mandate and the efficient start-up of the Mission's expanded police component.

38. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Guinea-Bissau, chaired by the Department of Political Affairs, continued to meet during the reporting period to provide guidance for the establishment of the integrated office, focusing on the development of an integrated strategic framework for the future work of the United Nation system in Guinea-Bissau.

XIII. Observations

39. I commend the people of Guinea-Bissau, the Government, the National Electoral Commission and the defence and security forces for the peaceful and well-organized presidential elections, which constituted an important step towards achieving political stability and security. I also thank international partners who provided timely and necessary assistance to the National Electoral Commission and other relevant national institutions.

40. I note at the same time that the record abstention rate observed during these elections could reflect voters' frustration, disappointment and disillusionment with repeated elections that have yet to result in tangible peace and development dividends. I therefore urge political leaders to foster dialogue and accountability towards their constituents, in order to reinforce democracy in Guinea-Bissau and regain the confidence of the citizens in their representatives and in the democratic process.

41. I am encouraged that the National Assembly is preparing for a national conference to identify the root causes of conflict and also conflict prevention mechanisms and strategies. I strongly recommend that such an important initiative be inclusive and be built on existing national dialogue programmes. It is also important to capitalize on the positive momentum gained from the recent presidential elections and the optimism observed among the population, national actors and the international community to improve the social and economic situation of the population in order to consolidate peace and fully realize human rights in the country.

42. I urge the President, the Prime Minister and the Government, the National Assembly and State institutions to work together in order to reinforce the democratic process in Guinea-Bissau, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law and meet the population's aspiration for peace, security and socio-economic development. Lessons learned from past experiences show that any change in the political environment, including any cabinet reshuffle, if not undertaken cautiously, could be a motive for further destabilization. The priorities of the Government, including the reforms of the defence and security, justice and public administration sectors, must be implemented.

43. There is a window of opportunity in Guinea-Bissau that must be seized. The United Nations, in particular through the establishment of the integrated peacebuilding office, will aim to capitalize on this momentum to provide better and tangible support to the Government and the people of Guinea-Bissau. I encourage Guinea-Bissau's international partners to continue supporting the country in this regard. I take note of the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with Guinea-Bissau, and recommend that the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund further engage and seek synergies with the Bretton Woods institutions and the African Development Bank. It is also important that the national

authorities and their international partners coordinate their efforts to mobilize and use available resources for better impact.

44. I note with satisfaction that the new President and the Government have reaffirmed their commitment to hold investigations into the political assassinations of March and June 2009. The successful completion of the ongoing investigations will assist in combating impunity and will contribute to justice and national reconciliation. It will also improve the image of Guinea-Bissau and restore the confidence of the international community in the ability of the national authorities and their commitment to human rights, the rule of law, due process and the administration of justice. In this connection, it is vital that consultations continue between the national authorities and the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries, with a view to ensuring international support for the investigations.

45. I would like to conclude by commending the staff of UNOGBIS, under the leadership of my Representative, Joseph Mutaboba, and the personnel of the entire United Nations country team, for the important work they continue to carry out in Guinea-Bissau.